

# Summer Fitness Tips and Tricks!

Summer 2017

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Thanks to American Physical Therapy Association and MoveForward PT we are able to pull together some great tips for some common summer activities to help keep you pain free. These include bike fitting tips, solutions to possible biking problems, gardening, swimming and running tips. These are compiled all in the hopes to keep you moving and pain free this summer! If you would like more information or tips on others topics we encourage you to visit [MoveForwardPT.com](http://MoveForwardPT.com).

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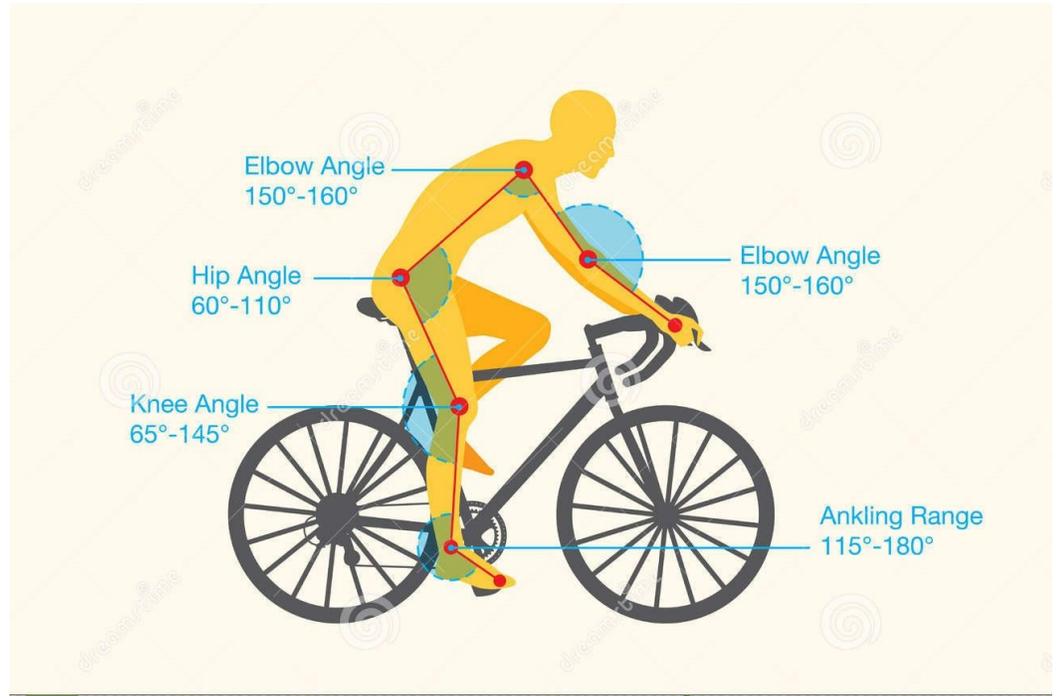


## Bike Fit Tips for Healthy Cycling

Bicycle-related pain and injuries are commonly associated with poor bike fit. If you have pain related specifically to cycling, you might have a bike fit problem.

## Bike Fit Basics

- Keep a controlled but relaxed grip of the handlebars.
- Change your hand position on the handlebars frequently for upper body comfort.
- When pedaling, your knee should be slightly bent at the bottom of the pedal stroke.
- Avoid rocking your hips while pedaling.



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## Problems and Possible Solutions

### Problem: Anterior (Front) Knee Pain

Possible causes are having a saddle that is too low, pedaling at a low cadence (speed), using your quadriceps muscles too much in pedaling, misaligned bicycle cleat for those who use clipless pedals, and muscle imbalance in your legs (strong quadriceps and weak hamstrings).

### Problem: Neck Pain

Possible causes include poor handlebar or saddle position. A poorly placed handlebar might be too low, at too great a reach, or at too short a reach. A saddle with excessive downward tilt can be a source of neck pain.

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**Problem: Lower Back Pain**

Possible causes include inflexible hamstrings, low cadence, using your quadriceps muscles too much in pedaling, poor back strength, and too-long or too-low handlebars.

**Problem: Hamstring Tendinitis**

Possible causes are inflexible hamstrings, high saddle, misaligned bicycle cleat for those who use clipless pedals, and poor hamstring strength.

**Problem: Hand Numbness or Pain**

Possible causes are short-reach handlebars, poorly placed brake levers, and a downward tilt of the saddle.

**Problem: Foot Numbness or Pain**

Possible causes are using quadriceps muscles too much in pedaling, low cadence, faulty foot mechanics, and misaligned bicycle cleat for those who use clipless pedals.

**Problem: Iliotibial Band Syndrome (ITBS)**

Possible causes are too-high saddle, leg length difference, and misaligned bicycle cleat for those who use clipless pedals.

## Gardening

Common gardening activities, such as digging, planting, weeding, mulching, and raking can cause stress and strain on muscles and joints. This is especially true for senior citizens and people who are normally sedentary. Different body areas such as the shoulders, neck, back, and knees can be vulnerable to injury during gardening.



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## The following tips can help minimize or prevent injuries:

- Warm up before you garden. A 10 minute brisk walk and stretches for the spine and limbs are good ways to warm up.
- Change positions frequently to avoid stiffness or cramping.
- Be aware of how your body feels as you work in your garden. If a part of your body starts to ache, take a break, stretch that body part in the opposite direction it was in, or switch to a different gardening activity. For example, if you've been leaning forward for more than a few minutes, and your back starts to ache, slowly stand up, and gently lean backwards a few times.
- Make use of a garden cart or wheelbarrow to move heavy planting materials or tools. Be sure to keep your back straight while using a wheelbarrow.
- If kneeling on both knees causes discomfort in your back, try kneeling on one and keep the other foot on the ground. Use knee pads or a gardening pad when kneeling.
- If kneeling or leaning down to the ground causes significant pain in your back or knees, consider using elevated planters to do your gardening.
- Use good body mechanics when you pick something up or pull on something, such as a weed. Bend your knees, tighten your abdominals, and keep your back straight as you lift or pull things. Avoid twisting your spine or knees when moving things to the side; instead, move your feet or pivot on your toes to turn your full body as one unit.
- Avoid bending your wrist upwards when pulling things or using gardening tools. Instead, keep your wrist straight and use your shoulder muscles to pull and lift.
- End your gardening session with some gentle backward bending of your low back, a short walk and light stretching, similar to stretches done before starting.



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# Proper Swim Stroke to Avoid Shoulder Injuries

Swimming is a low-impact exercise that works all the muscles in the body. That's why many injured athletes turn to the pool to maintain fitness and rehabilitate an injury at the same time. This does not mean that swimming is an injury-free activity. Shoulder injuries are the most common injury in swimming, and a proper swim stroke technique is crucial in injury prevention of them.

## These are 5 tips to improve your swimming stroke and avoid injuries:

1. **Bilateral Breathing:** The ability to breathe comfortably on both sides is important while swimming the freestyle stroke. By changing sides, you are equalizing muscle development and achieving symmetry. It also allows for smoother and more even strokes. It may feel awkward on one side at first. With consistent practice, it will become more natural and lead to a more efficient stroke.
2. **Posture:** Your posture out of the pool can affect your posture in the pool. If you have tightness in the chest muscles or rounded shoulder posture, this can put you more at



risk for shoulder impingement. The shoulders should be back and the chest forward during a freestyle stroke. Shoulder impingement occurs when the tendons become pinched, irritated, and inflamed in the shoulder region. Position of the head while swimming should be looking forward and down, so the water will crest above the eyebrows.

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3. **Kick:** The kick should originate from the hips. In other words, “kick your legs,” don’t kick your feet. There should be a slight bend in your knee at all times. Your toes will naturally point.
  4. **“Catch and Pull”:** The “catch” is when the hand enters the water. You are essentially “catching” the water, with the third or fourth finger leading the arm, with your wrist slightly bent at the line of your goggles. If the thumb enters the water first, it can cause the shoulder to internally rotate and can lead to a shoulder injury.  
The “pull” is the sweeping phase when the arm pulls through the water to move the body forward. The hand and arm should enter the water as an extension of the shoulder. If the arm crosses over the midline or is too wide, it could cause shoulder injury.
  5. **Body Rotation:** Your body should rotate as if your spinal column is a skewer. As the right arm enters the water, the body should rotate slightly toward the right, and vice versa. A flat body posture also can lead to shoulder injury. Body rotation also facilitates bilateral breathing.

In addition to the above tips, proper warm-up and stretching exercises are important to reduce injury during swim sessions. Strength training to the shoulder, particularly the rotator cuff, scapular, and core muscles, will enable you to have a more powerful and efficient stroke. Once you are proficient in swimming freestyle, you can learn other strokes. Alternating different strokes prevents repetitive motion that can lead to overuse injuries.

## Healthy Running Tips

### Proper Training and Common Mistakes

#### Myth 1: Recovery is a break from training

Recovery time isn’t a break from training, it is part of it. Runners, particularly those at the Master’s (40+) level, can consider taking recovery time every third week instead of every fourth week during a marathon training program. Consider using cross training, such as the elliptical or bike, to substitute for recovery runs to give your legs a break. This allows you to rest your legs while remaining on track for a successful race.



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## Myth 2: Push through the pain

Runners know how to handle pain. But how do you determine what pain is normal and what is cause for alarm? Muscle soreness that eases as you run can be normal. However, pain you should be concerned about may have one or more of the following characteristics:

- Pain that does not subside within several hours after running.
- On a pain scale of 1-10 (10 being worst pain), pain that exceeds 3 while running.
- The onset of sharp pain.
- Pain that wakes you up at night.
- Persistent pain that worsens when you run.
- Pain that persists in the same area, every time you run.

A physical therapist can help determine the cause of the problem and recommend effective cross training exercises, identify when poor form may be contributing to your pain, and prescribe necessary changes in training to allow the body to repair itself.

<p><b>TIP OF THE MONTH:</b> <i>Running!</i></p>	 <p><b>Sandra Hayner PT, OCS</b></p> <p>Sandy is a board certified Orthopedic Clinical Specialist. She specializes in manual therapy to treat a variety of orthopedic problems.</p>
<p>This month's topic is brought to you by Sandra Hayner.</p> <p>"Physical therapy can help runners maintain optimal form and decrease overuse injuries. Through assessment of Lower Extremity motor control with dynamic movement, hip group strength/facilitation, and foot and ankle mechanics, we can provide a tailored treatment program to address individual impairments."</p>	

## Myth 3: You can zone out on a run

Running can clear your mind and provide stress relief. However, thinking about your form while running can help you make subtle improvements.

- "Listen to how you run,"
- "Notice how you strike the ground. Does it sound the same on both sides, or is one foot strike louder?"
- "Recognize that as you fatigue, your form is more likely to be compromised."

Usually when a runner's form is compromised mechanical stress increases and injury can soon follow.



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## Your Body on a Running Regimen

A running regimen often reveals the body's inefficiencies or misalignment. For example, improper foot alignment can cause hip pain, or improper hip alignment can cause knee pain. Physical therapists help runners adjust their running technique, thereby reducing risk of injury and improving race performance. Here are some common injuries, pain points, and form issues runners may experience:

① Female runners are more likely to experience hip pain and should speak with their physical therapist about proper running technique, which may improve hip alignment and control. Imbalances at the hip can cause iliotibial band syndrome, which appears as pain on the outside of the knee.

② Knees are the number one site of injury for runners. In fact, anterior knee injuries make up 20 percent of all runner injuries.

③ Patellafemoral syndrome, or runner's knee, is often a result of overstriding. When over striding, the foot lands too far from the body causing the leg to take on unnecessary stress that can injure the knee. Shortening the stride can reduce sharp heel strikes to lessen stress.

④ The most common sites of injury are different for runners over age 40. The Achilles tendon and calf are more vulnerable, and runners may experience an increase in soft tissue injuries.

⑤ Feet are complex. Achilles tendinitis, plantar fasciitis and over-pronation are all sources of discomfort for many runners. The correct footwear can help in many situations, but this isn't a cure-all. Exercise has been shown to have a beneficial effect on common running injuries, even for the foot.

⑥ Stress fractures are common in runners under age 30. They are often the cause of pain in the second metatarsal, the longest bone in the foot that stems out to the second toe.

